



April 2001

HIGHLIGHTS

Djibouti

WFP announces the closure of its special operation at the port of Djibouti.

Eritrea

Eritrea signs a loan agreement with United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

Ethiopia

Student protests result in the loss of 38 lives, 250 wounded and millions of dollars in damages.

Donors have responded favorably to the meningitis crisis.

Sudan

The Sudanese government agreed to the US proposal to postpone the debate on lifting the sanctions imposed on Sudan.

Kenya

Humanitarian and development agencies warned of food shortages in the country.

Somalia

The TNG appeals to the public to ban the circulation of fake currency that is causing inflation in Mogadishu.

Faction leaders opposed to the TNG met in south-central Somalia as a step towards replacing the TNG.

REGIONAL ISSUES

FAO reports 18 million face food shortage in east Africa: A report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on April 9, stated that there is a need for US\$ 140 million to assist 28 million people facing food shortages in Africa south of the Sahara this year. The report also stated that more than 60% of those facing food shortages, about 18 million people live in eastern Africa. FAO reported that in Kenya, 4.4 million face food shortages as a result of a two-year drought; in Eritrea and Ethiopia 1.8 million and 6.5 million people respectively require food assistance and relief as a result of the drought and the conflict that ended in December 2000. Sudan is also facing serious food shortages that are being exacerbated by the on going civil war that is impeding farming activities and distribution of relief assistance. The agency also noted that of the amount appealed for, only US\$ 9.6 million has been received from donors. *(FAO web site, April 9)*

Djibouti closes its border with Somalia: Djibouti, claiming that Somalia stole 3,000 boxes of cigarettes worth US\$ 800,000 closed its border with Somalia. A statement from the Office of the Djibouti Foreign Ministry announced the ban on the transport of all goods and people between Djibouti and Somaliland. This statement follows the alleged theft of cigarettes belonging to Djibouti businessman Abdirahman Bore, that were shared among men of Somaliland President Mohamed Ibrahim Egal after the men pretended to burn them. Following the theft, talks were held between Egal and Bore. However, a statement issued after the talks stated that trade with Djibouti will not continue due to conflicts and differences between the parties. The statement also noted that Bore's media report had displeased the Djiboutian Government as Bore gave a media report that was different from what he discussed with the President. *(HornAfrik, April 15; Radio Hargeysa, April 16; AFP, April 17: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)*

Somalia accuses Ethiopia of interference: A demonstration was staged by thousands of Somalis condemning Ethiopia's alleged interference in the internal affairs of Somalia on April 20. Earlier in the month, Somalia had sent a letter to the UN Security Council accusing Ethiopia of destabilizing Somalia. In reaction, Ethiopia's permanent representative to the UN, Abd al-Majid Husayn, rejected the accusations and said Ethiopia could not be used as a scapegoat for the internal problems of Somalia. Husayn added that Ethiopia has been making positive moves to help the country for the past 10 years. Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin also pointed out his country's commitment to restore peace in Somalia. However, reports from Bosaaso (northeastern Somalia, Puntland) town on April 13, stated that Ethiopia has amassed its forces along its border with the Somali northeastern regions. Somalia's Information Minister also accused Ethiopia of trying to overthrow the Transitional National Government (TNG) by arming opposition faction leaders in the south-central town of Baidoa. Contrary to the accusations, chairman of the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA), Col Hasan Muhammad Nur, strongly denied Ethiopian presence in the area. *(HornAfrik website, April 13, 15, & 19; AFP, April 7 & 18; Walta Information Center, April 6)*

Ethiopia signs SOFA: The Government of Ethiopia and the United Nations signed a Status-of-Forces Agreement (SOFA) concerning the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) on March 23. The SOFA outlines

the rights, privileges and obligations between the two parties within a legal framework. The agreement includes a guarantee of freedom of movement for all UNMEE military and civilian staff and the waiving of taxes for locally purchased goods for official use. (*UNMEE press release, March 27*)

Fifth MCC meeting held: During the fifth meeting of the Military Coordination Commission (MCC) held in Djibouti on April 6, the Eritrean delegate to the meeting confirmed that its defense forces have resumed repositioning on April 5 in order to continue the process of establishing the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ). The meeting discussed the establishment of a joint investigation team that will address possible future military incidents and the need for both countries to identify how NGOs, UN agencies and members of the international press cross the southern boundary between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The meeting was chaired by the Force Commander of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), Major-General Patrick Cammaert and was attended by senior representatives of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and a military delegation for Ethiopia and Eritrea. (*UNMEE Press release, April 6*)

Refugees repatriated: On April 10, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) resumed the voluntary repatriation of Somalia refugees in Ethiopia. The agency repatriated 1,760 out of the planned 60,000 Somalia refugees from the Camaboker refugee camp in southeastern Ethiopia to northwestern Somalia. UNHCR also plans to assist 10,000 Ethiopian returnees who were living among the Somalia refugees to resettle in their areas of origin. The refugee agency has already assisted 8,026 Ethiopians who had earlier fled from Somalia to return to their places of origin. UNHCR also reported on April 20 that more than 10,000 Somalia refugees fleeing inter-factional fighting arrived in the Kenyan border town of Mandera within two weeks time. (*United Nations Press Release, April 20; Somaliland Net web site, April 10: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services; Ethiopian Television, April 11: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services*)

DJIBOUTI

WFP announces operation closure on port: The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) announced on April 18 the closure of its special operation for infrastructure and equipment support to the port of Djibouti. The operation, launched by WFP in collaboration with the Djibouti Port authorities in November 1999, built a semi-permanent warehouse with a 5,000 metric tons capacity on berth 15 and dismantled two obsolete warehouses. Resurfacing of berth 13 also was carried-out to improve access and movements of trucks for direct loading from vessels, all at a total cost of approximately US\$ 1 million. (*Addis Tribune, April 20*)

Court passes sentence for grenade attack: On April 9, five men were sentenced to punishments ranging from life imprisonment to, in the case of former Minister and opposition leader Robleh Awalleh, a suspended six years term for throwing four grenades into a café in Djibouti that killed a child and injured 15 people in 1990. Outside the courthouse where the trial was being held, the police clashed with supporters of Awalleh, former leader of the National Democratic Party, who was found guilty of complicity to murder, attempted murder and destruction of public property. Awalleh said in a press statement that the "trial has nothing to do with justice, it is purely political"; however, prosecutors say he was the mastermind of the attack. (*AFP, April 9*)

The government of Japan has granted Eritrea US\$ 4 million for agricultural development.

ERITREA

Surtax abolished: On April 17, the Eritrean Ministry of Finance announced the abolishment of a surtax and additional deductions from salaries that was introduced in October 1998 after the start of the war with Ethiopia on an experimental basis. (*Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea, April 18: Quoted by BBC Monitoring*)

Eritrea and Yemen sign cooperation agreement: Eritrea and Yemen signed an agreement on trade, transport and maritime issues, economic and technical sectors in Asmara on April 18. The two countries agreed on the delimitation and demarcation of the maritime boundary based on the 1999 International Tribunal resolution and the 1982 Maritime Law. They have also agreed to continue with existing traditional fishing in the area based on the International Tribunal resolution. (*Erina news agency, April 18: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services*)

Grants and loans approved: Eritrea signed a US\$ 5 million loan agreement, to be paid in 20 years, with the United Arab Emirates on April 10. It also signed a US\$ 4.6 million loan agreement with Kuwait on March 21 for the repair and development of the power plant in Hirgigo (eastern Eritrea). In related news the government of Japan has granted Eritrea US\$ 4 million for agricultural development. The grant will be used to buy fertilizer, agricultural equipment and chemicals. (*Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea, April 9, 10 and March 10: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services*)

Eritrea submits landmine maps: In response to UNMEE's request for information on landmine locations following an accident involving vehicles belonging to Canadian peacekeepers, Eritrea on March 19 submitted a detailed map of mined areas and information on areas where undetonated landmines lay. (*Visafric, March 19*)

Ten-year old died in mine accident: Medecins Sans Frontieres - France (MSF) reported that a mine accident that occurred on April 10 in the village of Giasha, in southern Eritrea, killed a 10-year old boy and a second 10-year old boy lost his right hand and received facial injuries. (*UNMEE press release, April 10*)

Britain to upgrade its consulate: Eritrean president, Isayas Afewerki, agreed to British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's proposal to upgrade the British consulate in Eritrea to a full embassy level. (*Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea, April 9: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services*)

ETHIOPIA

Students protest over polices: Students from Addis Ababa University protested over academic and political rights and police brutality on campus on April 18. The students boycotted lectures on April 17 and 18 ignoring a Ministry of Education deadline to resume lectures. High school pupils and young unemployed men protested taking the side of the students. The protest, however, got out of hand as stones were thrown at government buildings, cars were set ablaze and shops were looted. This resulted in clashes with the police that claimed 38 lives, 250 wounded and millions of dollars in material loss. The Ethiopian Federal Government, in a statement released on April 19, stated that the government had given appropriate response to the students' questions and had set procedures for the withdrawal of the campus police, but that the students had run out of patience prematurely. The statement blamed and warned opposition parties for exploiting the situation and using students to promote anarchy in the city and said it will take appropriate actions against such forces. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education announced the closure of Addis Ababa University

indefinitely effective April 18. The media have reported that they are retrieving goods looted during the riot. (*Reuters, April 19; AFP April 20; CNN, April 20; ENA, April 21; Walta Information Center, April 21*)

WFP launches US\$89.7 million emergency operation: A press release issued by the World Food Programme (WFP) stated that it has launched US\$89.7 million emergency operation to feed 2.5 million small-scale farmers and drought-affected pastoralists in Ethiopia. The agency said that it is seeking support from donors to resource 260,000 metric tons of food to assist people affected by drought and recurring crop failure. WFP pointed out that due to favorable rains this year the agency is appealing for less food aid. (*ENA, April 10*)

Only 1.5 million doses of vaccine are required to arrest the spread of the meningitis outbreak..

UN appeals for 3.7 million meningitis vaccine: In Early April the United Nations Country Team for Ethiopia appealed to the international community to provide 3.7 million doses of vaccine to fight against the spread of meningitis. The team reported in a special alert that the outbreak surfaced in the Amhara Region in October 2000, and has since spread to the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' State, the Gambela Region in the west, Tigray in the north, and to Dire Dawa and the Somali region in the east. Since this appeal there has been a very favorable response by donors to the meningitis crisis, and now only 1.5 million doses of vaccine are required to arrest the spread of the outbreak as it continues to advance throughout Ethiopia. To date this meningitis outbreak has claimed 242 lives out of a total 4,131 cases reported. (*The Ethiopian Herald, April 10; EUE/WHO Special Alert, April 6 2001*)

US briefs business community: The United States International Trade Specialist Andrew O'Keefe briefed the Ethiopian business community in Addis Ababa on March 21, on the trade opportunities that could enable Ethiopia to become a beneficiary of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). The Act enables another 34 developing countries to receive benefits, including the ability to export products (for Ethiopia, around 1,835 products) tariff-free and quota free to U.S. markets for up to seven and a half more years. AGOA, part of the U.S. program known as the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) which provides quota and tariff benefits for more than 4,500 additional products manufactured in developing nations, was signed last May into law by former President Bill Clinton. (*ENA March 21; Walta Information Centre, March 22*)

IMF approves US\$ 112 million in principle: In an effort to support the Ethiopian economic program of 2000-2003, the International Monetary Fund approved in principle a three-year credit worth US\$ 112 million. The program, according to IMF Deputy Managing Director Shigemitsu Sugisaki, reorients spending from defense towards poverty and maintaining a durable peace, sets realistic although ambitious objectives to achieve higher GDP (gross domestic product) growth of seven to eight percent, and aims to contain inflation and rebuild international reserves. (*AFP March 20*)

Ethiopia Signs Debt Reduction Agreement: The Government of Ethiopia and Belgium signed a debt reduction agreement on April 10 amounting to US\$ 19.3 million constituting more than 95% of the US\$ 20.3 million non-ODA debt of Ethiopia from Belgium. The reduction, Ethiopian Finance Minister Suffian Ahmed said, would support Ethiopia's efforts to pursue various multi-sector priority development programs to which a significant share of government expenditure has been invested. The two countries have also signed a general bilateral umbrella development framework and a specific agreement on the creation of a Belgium Ethiopian study and consultancy fund as well as exchange of notes on the establishment of a Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC) office in Ethiopia. Similarly on April 6, an agreement was signed between the government of Ethiopia and the Paris

*Sudan's Ambassador
Al-Khidr Harun has been
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Washington.*

club Countries in Paris for the cancellation and rescheduling of 67% of the US\$ 430 million debt Ethiopia was due to pay to creditors by March 31, 2004. (ENA, April 6, April 11; Ethiopian Herald, April 10)

MOD starts notifying families: Ethiopian Ministry of Defense (MOD) started notifying the families of tens of thousands soldiers who died during the two and a half year border war with Eritrea. (BBC news online, April 5)

SUDAN

Sudan accepts postponement of debate on sanctions and Sudan Embassy to reopen in US: The Sudanese government agreed to the United States proposal to postpone the debate on lifting the sanctions imposed on Sudan by the Security Council. The debate is postponed to August to allow further coordination among the United States, the non-aligned movement's countries and Sudan to reach a consensus for lifting sanctions. Meanwhile, Sudan in its effort to lift the ban made contacts and was able to get unanimity from Arab, Africa, Islamic and non-aligned movement's groups. Sudan made the request based on what it claimed to be strong evidence of the fulfillment of all the requirements to lift the ban including Security Council's resolutions and normalization of its relations with its neighboring countries. In related news, Sudan officials said that Sudan accepted the proposal to avoid confrontation with the new US administration, as "there are encouraging signals" regarding the relations between the two countries and also because Sudan would like to secure the adoption of a unanimous vote in the Security Council on the lifting of sanctions. As a sign of the thawing relations between the two countries, Sudan had dispatched Ambassador Al-Khidr Harun from Tokyo to Washington, where he had been instructed to reopen the Sudanese Embassy at the "charge d'affaires" level. (AFP, April 9; AP, April 12; IRIN, April 13; Suna News Agency, April 14;)

News correspondent released: Sudanese authorities released Alfrik Taban, a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Reuters correspondent, on April 17. Alfrik was arrested on April 11 by Sudanese authorities when a clash erupted between students and police while he was covering an Easter function at the invitation of a local church group. The police also charged 47 of the 56 people arrested during the clash of disturbing public peace. Consequently, Amnesty International on April 20, urged the Sudanese government to investigate the shooting, beatings and arrests by the riot police and also for a fair trial for those charged. (Network for the Defense of Independent Media in Africa (NDIMA); April 13 Reuters, April 20, 17 & 14)

WFP diverted food for 3 million people: World Food Programme (WFP) spokeswoman Lindsey Davis, said that food destined for Ethiopia had been diverted to Sudan to help bridge the flow of emergency food aid needed for more than three million people. Davis said the food aid is "... only enough for one month, and doesn't solve the problem". (IRIN, April 10)

Plane crash kills Deputy Defense Minister: A military plane crash in southern Sudan on April 4 claimed the lives of Sudan's Deputy Defense Minister and 15 other military officials. The Sudanese army blamed the crash on a sandstorm that made visibility very poor on landing causing the pilot to miss the start of the runway. The crash was a blow to the Islamist government as the Deputy Defense Minister, Colonel Ibrahim Shams Eddin, spent most of his time in the south and east orchestrating the war against the rebels. The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) has denied that its forces were involved in the crash. (Reuters, April 4; AFP, April 4 & 5)

Ministry of Health said international experts ruled out suspected case of Ebola.

KENYA

Food shortage: On April 11, 42 humanitarian and development agencies in a joint statement warned that food shortages in Kenya are creating a desperate situation in the country. The agencies, stating that more than four million people are facing starvation, pointed out the inadequate response by the international community in response to their appeal for food. The statement noted the recovery stage from the devastating drought in parts of Kenya and pointed out the food shortages in the north and east of Kenya. *(IRIN, April 11)*

Ebola outbreak ruled out: Following a week of uncertainty due to an outbreak of an unknown disease with similar symptoms to Ebola, Kenya's Ministry of Health has ordered all hospitals to set up emergency management units for all types of haemorrhagic fever. The fear of Ebola originated from a patient who died of a similar disease and another who is receiving treatment. However, tests indicated that the girl died of a septicaemia blood infection and not of Ebola. The Ministry of Health said that local and international medical experts have ruled out an outbreak of Ebola. *(Panafrican news agency, April 14; KBC radio, April 12: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)*

Huge fire destroys the main foreign currency market in Boosaaso in Puntland.

SOMALIA

TNG promises new currency: On April 17, Mogadishu markets refused to accept the circulation of recently counterfeited money printed by Indonesian companies. In a news conference held on April 7, at the presidency of the Transitional National Government (TNG) to comment on the fake currency, Prime Minister, Ali Khalif Galayr, said that the currency was printed by Somali businessmen, allegedly under the authorization of Puntland leader, Abdulahi Yusuf. Galayr regarded the businessmen (who earlier promised not to import fake currency) as international criminals and said they will face the full force of the law. An association of the business community in Banaadir Region [Mogadishu and its environs], issued a press release condemning and warning the consequence of the importation. The TNG, meanwhile appealed to the public to ban the circulation of the fake currency promising that the government will issue new currency. The TNG also pointed out the inflation and hardship that has occurred in Mogadishu as a result of the currency. In related news, a huge fire destroys the main foreign currency market in the town of Boosaaso [commercial city of Puntland] on April 20. On the other hand, the authorities of the self-declared Puntland detained several prominent foreign exchange dealers. *(Radio Banaadir, April 11: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services; HornAfrik web site, April 7&21 : Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)*

Faction leader meets opposing TNG: Around 20 faction leaders opposed to the Transitional National Government (TNG) in Mogadishu met beginning from April 19 in Baydhabo (south-central Somalia) as a step to replace the TNG. The faction leaders who met under the support of the Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council (SRRC) discussed merging their militiamen into one force, drafting a constitution and a reconciliation conference. The faction leaders announced the creation of committees which will deal with defense, reconciliation, Somali customs, economy and finance, organization, disaster preparedness, and a committee in charge of organizing a national conference. *(Qaran web site, April 23; HornAfrik web site, April 22, AFP, April 19)*

Two UN workers released: As a result of efforts by traditional leaders and prominent public figures two UN officials held in Karaan District of Mogadishu by Somali gunmen were released on April 4. *(HornAfrik web site, April 4)*

Somalia rejects Special Envoy: The Transitional National Government (TNG) of Somalia rejected and urged the Sudanese President al-Bashirs to recall the newly appointed Special Envoy to Somalia. The Envoy, sent to implement the directives of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) aimed at bringing stability in the country, was accused by Somalia Information Minister Zakaria Mahmud Haji Abdi, of meeting some Somali factions opposed to the TNG. He also said his government was not consulted prior to the appointment of the Envoy. (*Qaran, April 12: quoted by BBC Monitoring Services; Republic of Sudan Radio, April 3: quoted by BBC Monitoring Services*)

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SOURCES:

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